

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 04995 091039Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----123645 091044Z /16
O 090801Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7133

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 4995

NODIS

PASS WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, US
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S VIEWS ON LEBANON

1. DURING OUR MEETING JULY 8, PRIME MINISTER BEGIN BROUGHT UP LEBANON AND WENT INTO THE SUBJECT AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH. HE HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN REVIEWING THE BACKGROUND BOTH OF OUR POSITION AND OF THE PREVIOUS ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AND BEHAVIOR. HE SPOKE QUIETLY BUT FIRMLY AND WAS CLEARLY WELL INFORMED.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER ASKED ME TO ASSURE PRESIDENT CARTER THAT ISRAEL DOES NOT WANT ANY LEBANESE TERRITORY. MOREOVER, HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES IN THE CONVERSATION THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT TAKE US BY SURPRISE. IF WHAT HE TERMED "CONTINGENCY EVENTS OR DIFFICULTIES" AROSE, HE PROMISED TO CONSULT WITH US, TO ASK OUR ADVICE AND TO SPEAK WITH US AS FRIENDS BEFORE TAKING ANY DECISIONS. HE SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD WE SUPPORTED PRESIDENT SARKIS AND THAT WE SUPPORTED THE SYRIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. ISRAEL ALSO SUPPORTS SARKIS BUT THE SYRIAN PRESENCE IS ANOTHER MATTER.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 04995 091039Z

3. I SAID THAT I WAS VERY PLEASED TO HAVE HIS ASSURANCE ABOUT "SURPRISES." IT WAS CONSISTENT WITH THE APPROACH TAKEN BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. I NOTED THAT WE HAVE DIPLOMATIC ASSETS WHICH COULD HELP IN CASE DIFFICULTIES AROSE, AND THAT WE THOUGHT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN AN OPEN AND FRANK CONSULTATION.. I ADDED THAT I THOUGHT IT VERY DESIRABLE

FOR HIM TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE, IF THE PRESIDENT DID NOT DO SO, TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL THE LEBANESE SITUATION DURING HIS WASHINGTON VISIT. BOTH OUR ADMINISTRATIONS WERE NEW. IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT FOR US TO HAVE AN AUTHORITATIVE APPRECIATION OF WHAT EACH OF US IS DOING AND WHAT ARE EACH COUNTRY'S OBJECTIVES.

4. BEGIN WENT ON TO OBSERVE THAT THE LEBANESE BORDER IS NOW A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS PROLONGATION OF ISRAEL'S DEFENSE PERIMETER. THE SYRIANS IN LEBANON, POSSESSING SOVIET ARTILLERY, COULD ALREADY FOR THE FIRST TIME THREATEN TO KNOCK OUT THE OIL REFINERIES AROUND HAIFA, AND IMPORTANT STRATEGIC TARGET. HE RECALLED THAT LEBANON HAD NOT INTERFERED IN THE 1956, 1967 OR 1973 WARS. IF THE SYRIANS WERE TO PUSH FURTHER TOWARDS ISRAEL'S NORTHERN BORDER AND OCCUPY IT--AND THIS APPEARS TO BE LEFT TO THE ARABS TO DECIDE--THIS WOULD THEN CONSTITUTE, FROM ISRAEL'S VIEWPOINT, A PROLONGATION OF BORDERS HOSTILE TO ISRAEL.

5. BEGIN THEN ANALYZED THE HISTORY OF THE SYRIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. HE RECALLED THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY SYRIA HAD BEEN THE CENTER OF PAN-ARAB NATIONALISM. ASAD WANTED TO MAKE DAMASCUS AGAIN THE CENTER OF ARAB NATIONALISM. IN ADDITION, HIS DREAM OF A GREATER SYRIA INCLUDES
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TEL AV 04995 091039Z

LEBANON AND AT LEAST PART OF PALESTINE. AS FAR AS ISRAEL IS CONCERNED, ASAD HAS NO RIGHT TO BE IN LEBANON.

6. BEGIN CONTINUED THAT ISRAEL'S MAIN PREOCCUPATION WAS THE SURVIVAL OF THE CHRISTIAN MINORITY IN LEBANON. HE ASSURED ME AGAIN THAT HE WOULD NOT TAKE US BY SURPRISE. HE THEN WENT ON AT LENGTH TO DESCRIBE ISRAEL'S COMMITMENT TO DO ALL IN ITS POWER TO PRESERVE NON-MUSLEM MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE RECALLED THAT ISRAEL, TOGETHER WITH IRAN AND THE U.S., HAD EXTENDED MILITARY SUPPORT TO THE UJRDS OF IRAQ. THEIR FATE WAS A GREAT TRAGEDY. ISRAEL NOW WAS EXTENDING, AND WILL CONTINUE TO EXTEND, HELP TO THE CHRISTIAN MINORITY IN LEBANON. KISSINGER, HE RECALLED, HAD TOLD RABIN THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT HEAR ANY RESERVATIONS FROM THE U.S. ABOUT THIS SUPPORT.

7. I TOLD BEGIN THAT WE WERE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN LEBANON. SARKIS WAS IN A REMARKABLY UNHAPPY SITUATION. HE WAS JUST BEGINNING TO REASSEMBLE

HIS ARMY AND TO TRY TO BUILD A CREDIBLE PEACEKEEPING FORCE. WE HAVE NOT YET MADE UP OUR MINDS ABOUT HIS REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN REBUILDING HIS ARMY AND WE WOULD WANT TO HAVE BEGIN'S VIEW ON THIS.

8. BEGIN TOLD ME THAT DAYAN HAD BRIEFED HIM ON OUR DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT. ISRAEL, HE SAID, DOES NOT OBJECT TO THE RECREATION OF THE LEBANESE ARMY PER SE, BUT IT DOES NOT WANT A 3,000-5,000 MAN PALESTINIAN FORCE TO BE ABLE TO OPERATE FREELY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS. NOTE: I HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED FROM EVRON THE OFFICIAL GOI RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON. AM REPORTING THAT FAVORABLE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 TEL AV 04995 091039Z

REPLY IN A LESS RESTRICTED MESSAGE.)

9. BEGIN WENT ON TO NOTE THAT THE CHRISTIANS WERE NOW ASKING ISRAEL TO SAY OPENLY THAT IT WAS HELPING THEM AND THAT IT WOULD NOT TOLERATE THEIR DESTRUCTION. A YEAR AGO THEY WERE VERY WARY AND HAD WANTED THEIR CONNECTION WITH ISRAEL TO BE KEPT SECRET. BUT OF COURSE ISRAEL WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFUL HOW IT HANDLED THIS MATTER. IT DOES NOT WANT TO PROVOKE ANY WAR WITH SYRIAN, ALTHOUGH, OF COURSE, IT WOULD DEFEND ITSELF IF ATTACKED.

10. I CONCLUDED THIS PART OF THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT OUR DISCUSSION SEEMED TO ME TO UNDERSCORE THE DESIRABILITY OF A THOROUGH REVIEW OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION DURING HIS VISIT. BEGIN ASSURED ME THAT HE WOULD TAKE UP ALL THESE QUESTIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT.
LEWIS

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, PERSONAL OPINION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, PEACE TALKS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 09-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TELAV04995
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P850106-1537, N770004-0204
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770773/aaaaczk.tel
Line Count: 155
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4f3ef96d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1911074
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S VIEWS ON LEBANON
TAGS: PGOV, IS, US, (BEGIN MONIQUE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4f3ef96d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009